

Testimony Supporting HB 5299: An Act Increasing the Age of Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families.

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 8, 2022

Dear Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, Senator Witkos, Representative Haines, and esteemed members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Larry Backes, and I am a resident of Guilford. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 5299: An Act Increasing the Age of Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families.

I am not a foster child, nor have I ever raised foster children, however I have raised three children and put them through college. I can tell you from my experience that none of my children were able to finish college and start their lives by 21. The best child finished college at 23. And while 21 is the legal age of adulthood, I believe that biological adulthood occurs around 28. It is ridiculous to think a young person with no resources or family backing them to finish school by 21.

Secondly, I went to college at 18 and the first day of junior year my counselor called me into his office and told me I could leave until I chose a major. I told him I did not know what I wanted to do. He said too bad and forced me to pick a major. I picked business. 6 years later at age 27, I realized Engineering was the field I needed to be in. I had to go back to school a second time to get my engineering degree.

Lastly, as someone who worked for years in corporate America, I can tell you that a bachelor's degree is not better than a high school diploma these days. These young people must be given the resources to complete a master's degree and a doctorate. We are critically short of well qualified doctors. Some of these people want to go into medicine. Without this bill, they have an enormous task of trying to work while studying to get their MD. It is the logical thing to do for this population.

The Connecticut General Assembly should provide DCF the resources to extend higher education support up to age 30. I urge you to favorably pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Larry Backes

Guilford

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